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The paper examines the contributions Donald Graves has made to research on written composition. Particular attention is given to his case studies of the writing processes of young children. The results of these studies, and their implications for instruction, are examined and discussed.

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A NEW LOOK AT YOUNG WRITERS: THE WRITING-PROCESS RESEARCH OF DONALD GRAVES

Larry A. Gentry

For the last eight years, Donald Graves, currently the director of the Writing Process Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire, has been observing the writing behaviors of children. His original and highly significant studies include an investigation of the composing processes of seven-year olds (1974), a longitudinal study of writing development in the primary grades (1979a), and an examination of the current state of writing in the United States (1978a).

Graves is strongly convinced that educators have long underestimated and neglected the writing abilities of children. While conceding that writing has seldom, if ever, been accorded the same curricular status as reading and mathematics, he believes that recent trends in education have even further reduced the time and attention given to writing instruction. According to Graves, "The crisis in writing is more serious than the surface treatment given to it by critics" (1978b, p. 636).

Unlike those who would have American education return to the instructional models of an earlier era, Graves is firmly opposed to segmenting the basic writing skills. Following a year-long investigation of contemporary writing instruction, he reported:

> All signs point to less writing, not more. The so-called return to basics vaults over writing to the skills of penmanship, vocabulary, spelling, and usage that are thought necessary to precede composition. So much time is devoted to blocking and tackling drills that there is often no time to play the real game, writing. (1978a, p. 10)

Graves believes that the writing problem has its roots in a constellation of current assumptions, perceptions, and practices. He lists the following factors as the "real deficiencies" that educators should be addressing:

1. Writing is considered a form of etiquette; the avoidance of error supersedes the importance of content.
2. Students are expected to be passive receivers of information, not active, expressive senders with something important to say.
3. Reading dominates elementary education. For each dollar spent on teaching writing, one hundred dollars are spent on teaching reading.
4. Teachers (including high school English teachers) receive virtually no training in the teaching of writing.
5. Most language arts textbooks stress grammar, vocabulary, and other subskills. Little attention is given to writing.
6. Workbook exercises seldom require students to write their answers. Marking, circling, and underlining are more common responses.
7. Essays are being replaced by computer-scored tests in high schools and colleges.
8. Students at all levels are seldom given writing assignments. A survey of three school systems that allegedly stress writing showed that children in the second through the fourth grades wrote an average of one piece per month. Secondary school students wrote even less.
9. The current emphasis on accountability and evaluation causes teachers to focus on measurable skills.
10. Writing is often used as a punishment for misbehavior. (1978a)

The Cheektowaga Study

Graves' interest in the global aspects of writing instruction grew out of his earlier research on children's writing development. As a doctoral candidate at the State University of New York at Buffalo,

he conducted a unique investigation of the writing processes of seven-year olds. Until then, little attention had been given to what children actually do and think when they write. Only three previous studies had dealt with aspects of the writing process. Sawkins (1971) asked fifth graders to answer questions about their writing habits and experiences after they finished writing. Holstein (1970) reported on fourth graders' use of metaphor while writing, and Emig (1971) conducted a landmark study into the writing processes of high school seniors.

Graves' (1974) study, entitled Children's Writing: Research Directions and Hypotheses Based Upon an Examination of The Writing Processes of Seven-Year Old Children, sought to provide some insights into several provocative questions. For example, (1) what are the differential effects of formal and informal learning environments on the writing development of children? (2) How do boys and girls differ in such areas as writing frequency and thematic choice? (3) Is it possible to identify developmental factors in the writing process?

To provide some tentative answers to these and other questions, Graves made arrangements for a five-month, on-site study in two schools in Cheektowaga, New York, a "blue-collar" suburb of Buffalo. Four classrooms were selected for observation, two of which he classified as "formal," and the other two as "informal." A formal classroom was defined as one where children selected their activities no more than 30% of the time, and the teacher spent no more than 30% of her time working with small groups or individuals. An informal classroom was defined as one in which children selected at least 60% of their

activities and the teacher spent at least 65% of her time working with small groups and individuals.

The basic design of the project involved the following:

(1) Descriptions of the classroom environments, writing frequencies, and writing themes of 94 children in four classrooms.

(2) The observation of 53 writing episodes of 14 children.

(3) The recording of eight children's views of their own writing and 17 children's concepts of what a good writer does.

(4) The gathering of detailed information on one child, including educational history, interviews with parents, and extended observation.

Graves' findings were quite surprising, challenging some long-held notions regarding learning environments and children's writing abilities. In a summary of his conclusions, he pointed out the following:

Learning Environments

1. Informal environments give greater choice to children. When children are given choice to write, they write more and in greater length than when specific writing assignments are given.

2. Results from informal environments demonstrate that children do not need direct motivation or supervision in order to write.

3. Formal environments seem to favor girls in that they write more, and to greater length, than do boys under both types of assignment conditions.

4. Informal environments seem to favor boys in that they write more than girls in assigned and unassigned work.

5. In any environment, formal or informal, unassigned writing is longer than assigned writing.

6. Environments that require large amounts of assigned writing inhibit the range, content, and amount of writing done by children.

7. The writing developmental level of the child is the best predictor of writing process behaviors and therefore transcends

the importance of environment, materials, and methodologies in influence on children's writing. (1974, p. 211)

Sex Differences in Writing

1. Girls compose longer writings than do boys in either formal or informal environments.

2. Boys from either environment write more in unassigned writing than do girls.[1] Unassigned writing seems to provide an incentive for boys to write about subjects not normally provided in teacher assigned work. Teachers do not normally assign work that includes themes from secondary and extended territory, the areas most used by boys in unassigned writing.[2]

3. Boys seldom use the first person form, especially the "I" form, unless they are developmentally advanced.

4. Boys write more about themes in secondary and extended territory than do girls. The only girls who write in these areas are those who are more developmentally advanced than other girls.

5. Girls write more about primary territory than do boys.

6. Boys are more concerned than girls with the importance of spacing, formation of letters and neatness in [their conception of what constitutes] "the good writer."

7. Girls stress more prethinking and organizational qualities, feelings in characterizations, and give more illustrations to support their judgments than do boys. (1974, pp. 211-12)

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[1]This statement appears to contradict statement #3 under Learning Environments. According to Graves' dissertation, boys in informal environments produced an average of 790 words in unassigned writing, while the girls averaged only 669 words. However, in formal environments, the girls averaged 196 words in unassigned writing, while the boys averaged only 147. When the results from both environments are combined, the boys come out with a slightly better average--443.5 to 432.7. (1974, p. 88.) Thus, this statement refers to the combined totals from both environments rather than either learning environment considered separately.

[2]Territoriality is a concept that Graves employs to explain the sociogeographic content of themes. "Primary territory covers the areas of greatest child experience, namely, the home and the school. Secondary territory expands to the metropolitan area around the child and includes transportation, adult vocations, professional athletics, and community events. Extended territory refers to national and world events and those persons identified with them" (1973, p. 1103).

Graves' observation of the writing behaviors of these children led him to hypothesize that such factors as a child's sex, language development, and problem-solving behaviors interact in various ways to produce two distinctive types of writers, reactive and reflective. According to Graves, they exhibit the following characteristics:

> Reactive: Erratic problem-solving strategies, the use of overt language to accompany prewriting and composing phases, ideation that evolves in action-reaction couplets, proofreading at the word unit level, a need for immediate rehearsal in order to write, rare contemplation or reviewing of products, characterizations that exhibit general behaviors similar to their own, a lack of a sense of audience when writing, and an inability to use reasons beyond the affective domain in evaluating their writing.
>
> Reflective: Little rehearsal before writing, little overt language to accompany writing, periodic rereadings to adjust small units of writing at the word or phrase level, growing sense of audience connected with their writing, characterizations that exhibit general behaviors similar to their own in the expression of feelings, and the ability to give examples to support their reasons for evaluating writing. (1974, pp. 212-13)

He points out that these are simply composite profiles of a general type, and that characteristics from both categories exist in varying degrees in all seven-year olds. More boys than girls manifest those behaviors characteristic of the reactive writer, while more girls fall into the reflective category.

This study was immediately recognized by others in the field as a significant step forward in composition research. In 1974, the year following its completion, the National Council of Teachers of English awarded Graves its Promising Researcher award.

After completing his doctoral studies, Graves joined the education faculty at the University of New Hampshire. In 1976 he took on the additional responsibility of serving as research editor for Language

Arts, a much respected journal in English education. The following year, he undertook a Ford Foundation study into the current status of writing. This investigation took him to four regions of the United States, as well as to England and Scotland. While the major part of the study focused on public-school writing instruction in the United States, Graves also examined writing instruction abroad, and inquired into the general writing habits of adult Americans.

The Atkinson Study

In 1978, Graves received a grant from the National Institute of Education for a two-year, longitudinal study of the writing processes of students in the first four grades. Beginning in the fall of 1978, he and two research associates, Lucy McCormick Calkins and Susan Sowers, would follow eight students through the first and second grades, and eight other students through the third and fourth grades. The specific purpose of the project was to identify the nature and sequence of changes in the writing behaviors of children. The following variables were identified for study:

1. Composing: Concept of composing, composing in several media forms, proofreading, precomposing activity, use of overt language while composing, reading habits, use of resources, themes in unassigned writing, use of territory in content areas, semantic and syntactic issues, use of logic, use of adverbs, verbs and verb tense.

2. Spelling: Approach to invented spelling, use of resources for spelling, concept of spelling, child's reading in relation to words used in writing, description of how he/she spells.

3. Handwriting: Use of thumb and forefinger, writing continuity, elbow position and motion, strength, use of space on paper, directional language, use of writing instruments, composing surfaces, imitation of set forms, concept of handwriting. (1979a, p. 77)

Information would be gathered through a variety of sources. Children would be observed before, during, and after writing episodes, with the researchers keeping detailed records of the text-generation process. In addition to personal observation and record-keeping, certain writing episodes would be recorded on video-tape while students composed. During the video-recording process, a small microphone would be attached to the writer in order to capture vocal and sub-vocal behavior. Other data would be acquired through the analysis of written products, and interviews with the children, their teachers, and their parents.

In order to select a study site, Graves visited five communities where he interviewed principals, teachers, and other educators. He described his site selection procedures as follows:

> Since this is a study of children and their development, socio-economic factors were not major criteria in making the community choice. Choice of the school was based on:
>
> 1. School Principal: Length of time in community, knowledge of curriculum, child growth and development, ability to work with staff and community.
>
> 2. Teachers: Provision of writing opportunities for children, breadth of expression in many media forms, general provision for good learning.
>
> 3. Receptivity to the Study: After the proposal was explained, how receptive was the staff and administration to being involved? (1979a, p. 80)

The school finally selected for the project was Atkinson Academy, the public elementary school serving Atkinson, New Hamshire, a bedroom community for Boston commuters. On-site research began in September, 1978, with the selection of students for case study. In selecting the eight

first graders and eight third graders to focus on during the study, Graves and his colleagues sought to identify children whose writing behaviors were representative of specific intervals of development. According to Graves, "The children will range from those who can barely hold a writing instrument to those who are able to revise their drafts" (1979a, p. 78). The first three weeks of the 1978-1979 school year were spent in selecting the subjects, using four factors as criteria: (1) actual writing practice, (2) motor control, (3) spelling, and (4) concepts of what good writers need to know (1979a, pp. 78-79).

Although the final results of this study will not be known until after the end of the 1979-1980 school year, Graves and his colleagues have issued a number of interim reports that permit a preliminary analysis (Calkins 1979a, 1979b, 1980a, 1980b, in press (a), in press (b), in press (c); Graves 1979a, 1979b, 1979c, 1979d; Sowers 1979a, 1979b, in press (a), in press (b)).

The Writing Processes of First Graders

Sowers (1979a) indicates that, in late October, 1978, shortly after the researchers began their study, the first-grade teacher changed her method of teaching writing. The teacher began the year in a relatively traditional fashion, furnishing the children with word lists, and assigning particular topics for writing. In October she visited a first-grade class where students were allowed to select their own topics, invent their own spellings, and write "books" for classroom publication. She then integrated these methods into her own curriculum. Sowers describes the new program as follows:

> Mrs. Giacobbe told the children they had a responsibility to write every day. The children chose their own topics and in most cases their own time to write. They took their completed

> books to Mrs. Giacobbe for a conference in which she first responded to the content and then to one problem in the writing. The lesson in the conference might have been leaving spaces between words, hearing a sound and writing it, or an aspect of punctuation for those who were ready. The children read their completed books to the entire class in a meeting after lunch and left them in the class library for anyone to read. After writing five books, the student could choose one to be published in a hard cover. (Sowers, 1979a, p. 830)

The transition from a traditional to an innovative curriculum enabled Graves and his associates to examine certain writing processes that would have otherwise been limited, if not completely absent.

According to the researchers, writing growth for most first graders is best characterized as a transition "from play to craft"; from a narrow to a broadened perception of time and space (Calkins, 1980a). In its initial stages, writing is frequently a simple act that begins and ends abruptly. Students arrive at their topics quickly, draw a picture to "rehearse" their text, write with little concern for space or neatness, and revise only at the word level. By the end of the year, many advanced first graders select their topics carefully, either don't draw or draw only after writing, show much concern for writing conventions, and revise for content and language (Graves, 1979c).

The writing process begins with the selection or imposition of a topic. As noted above, the children in this class were permitted to select their own topics. The researchers found that beginning writers arrived at a general topic almost immediately, often returning to the same subject time and time again (e.g., spaceships, pets). The specific details, however, were usually defined through drawings. Graves indicates that drawing "serves as a rehearsal for the text as well as an important bridge from speech to print" (1979d, p 19). As children become more adept at rehearsal, writing begins to precede drawing.

Influenced by Piagetian theory, Graves postulates that most beginning writers have a limited concept of time and space. They tend to view writing as an immediate event, not as the generation of a product that will exist beyond the event. The choice of a topic becomes selective only when children are capable of expanding their temporal and spatial boundaries. According to Graves, this probably occurs when children begin to realize that they are writing not only for themselves, but for an audience. At this stage, young writers often suffer their first case of "writer's block." Still subject to a limited number of topic choices and now aware of the need to meet certain expectations regarding writing conventions, they may delay the initiation of a piece of writing or try to avoid it completely. Fortunately, most first graders are able to pass through this stage to a point where topic choices are easier and they have more confidence in their developing abilities.

What types of writing do first graders produce when they are allowed to select their own topics? Sowers believes that, "Moffett [1968] and Britton [et al., 1975], whose rhetorical systems have developmental components, support the consensus that narrative precedes other modes of writing" (Sowers, in press (b), p. 1). She challenges this theory on the basis of her analysis of the written products of Atkinson's first graders. Her investigation reveals that, of the 36 "books" published by the children in November, 23 were non-narratives and only 13 were narratives. As the children advanced in their writing abilities, the percentage of published narratives increased: November, 36%; December, 60%; January, 50%; February, 64%; March, 78%; April, 100%; May and June, 78% (Sowers, in press (b), p. 3).

She presents the following as an example of early non-narrative prose:

> Whales are black and some are gray.
> Whales are big. They can eat you in one bite.
> There are brown whales and there are black whales too.
> There are white whales.
> There are blue killer whales. (p. 3)

Sowers concludes that these data have three significant implications:

> First, chronologic might not precede analogic in a hierarchy of abstraction. Moffett may have underestimated the difficulty of writing narrative . . .. A second implication is that analogic thinking may be rooted in pre-narrative, elaborated lists. Third, a mature writer may scale this modified ladder of abstraction with each new piece of writing. The writing process may be reformulated as listing, making inferences, and revising by means of tautologic thinking. (p. 15)

Sower's interpretation of the data is, however, itself open to challenge. In Moffett's spectrum of discourse, interior dialogue or egocentric speech precedes vocal dialogue, the locus of narrative (1968, p. 47). Discourse presumes a communicative intent. If it is true, as was discussed earlier, that the beginning writer is unaware of an audience, then writings such as the above may actually be a representation of egocentric speech rather than a form of discourse.

Additionally, Britton et al. (1975), whose study was limited to the written products of eleven to eighteen-year-olds, differentiate between "mature" and "immature" writing. Their function categories of transactional (including narrative), expressive, and poetic are limited to mature writing. They recognized ". . . that a child who was not capable of taking into account the needs of an inquirer might write in a form which was neither informative nor expressive but undifferentiated 'informative-cum-expressive'" (1975, p. 103). Thus,

they would probably contend that early non-narratives are examples of immature writing.

Permitting first graders to use invented spellings apparently has a beneficial effect on the amount of writing that they will undertake. Together, the 22 students in Mrs. Giacobbe's room wrote more than 1000 "books" during the 1978-1979 school year (Sowers, in press (b)). Sowers believes that, once children know the alphabet, they can begin to write through the use of invented spelling, even before they learn to read (in press (a)). She provides the following example of an invented spelling story; Kevin's fifteen-page, illustrated book, "All About Ants":

Ains r mvn in a bld and ther wra insid and ot
A man kam to kal the adts and a lae was tik a baf
6 siks mnd kan to kal the adts ther r im tip fo the adts
Tje adts ther tid dkn the mi per siat bui
the adts r in the pis the man cot sime fo the adts
the adts cat a man
a man lqcd the adts
the adst r tak the gid
the mans mrn kid sim fo the adts
2 mant kid l nis and a mid adts
the mant fir a lich ovf the adts daf
a man kib l0 adst
the mant r win the mant sisitt fir on the adts
the adst r at hie the adst r in the kins

Kevin's book, his first attempt, was later typed in standard spelling and bound for the class library. Here is the translation:

Ants are moving in a building. They are inside and outside.
A man came to kill the ants. A lady was taking a bath.
Six men came to kill the ants. They are on top of the ants.
The ants are tearing down the Empire State Building.
The ants are in the pipes. The men caught some of the ants.
The ants caught a man.
The men electrocuted the ants.
The ants are taking the gold.
The man's machines killed some of the ants.
Two men killed one nest and a mother ant.
The ants are losing.

The man threw a latch over the ants' door.
A man killed ten ants.
The men are winning. The men shoot fire on the ants.
The ants are at Hawaii. The ants are in containers.
(In press (a), pp. 1-2)

Kevin's long and rather complex story, and his use of precise, rather than general terms (e.g., electrocuted, latch, containers), stand in marked contrast to the condensed, stilted prose normally associated with first grade writing. Allowing children to use their own spellings seems to provide them with a degree of confidence and freedom that encourages them to experiment with words and structures that would not otherwise be employed in writing until much later.

Invented spellings evolve toward conventional spellings as the child develops academically. After comparing several stories over a period of time, Graves postulated that inventive spellers use words from four distinct categories:

1. Sight words: These words have reached the stage of final correct spelling. The words are known, stable, and will be revised if the child spots an error in them.

2. Stable inventions: These words are spelled the same way over a period of time even though they are inventions. Such words are Valin for villain, and neis for nice. Since these words have reached a point of stability, differences in these words will be noted and revised.

3. Words in transition: These words are invented, have appeared only several times in the child's writing. When these words appear, the child sounds them through as they are written. They may be written differently each time.

4. First inventions: These are new words invented for the first time as in botafll prnssas for beautiful princess. Of all words spelled, these are the least likely to be revised. If these words are revised at all, it is during the composing of the word itself. (1979d, p. 314)

Past experience had alerted Graves to the possibility that an intensive study of children's writing processes might unearth some new variables. According to Graves, " . . . one of the purposes of case study investigation is the discovery of new questions we don't even know exist" (1979a, p. 78). Such a variable did appear early in the Atkinson project--revision. The researchers discovered that the gradual adoption of various revision strategies is a fundamental element in the transition from immature to mature writing. The earliest revisions made by first graders are usually spelling and handwriting corrections (Graves, 1979d). As children become more proficient in these areas, other revision strategies begin to appear. Many first graders will add information in response to questions (Calkins, in press (c)), or delete parts of the text that, upon rereading the completed story, they find to be irrelevant (Graves, 1979c). Graves theorizes that like other writing behaviors, children's repertoire of revision techniques is governed by their use of time and space. "Word by word writers have word by word visions both in forward and reverse time patterns. Children with a broader vision use broader time units and make more advanced semantical and syntactical changes" (1979c, p. 16).

The interim reports thus far issued by the researchers are based on their findings during the first year of the project. At that time, all of the children were in either the first or third grade. Thus, no data on the writing processes of second or fourth graders is yet available.

The Writing Processes of Third Graders

At the beginning of the year, some third graders were reluctant to choose their own topics. They asked for assignments, used old "story-starters," or wrote about television programs (Calkins, in press (c)). Their teacher helped them overcome this block by asking them to bring in items from home, interview each other, and brainstorm. Calkins lists the teacher's reasons for insisting on personal topic selection as follows:

1. Deciding what you have to say is probably the hardest and most important part of writing. We cannot take this responsibility away from the writer.

2. As children consider, select, and reconsider their topics, they experience the revision process. This is often the first and easiest form of revision.

3. When writers write what they know and care about, their writing is their own. They are driven to make it good--they supply the initiative and the motivation. (In press (c), p. 9)[3]

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[3] In a separate paper, Calkins (1979b) lists three other, but similar reasons that the teacher wanted students to choose their own topics. Presumably, the statements in both lists are not direct quotations, but are intended to be representative of the teacher's general philosophy. The reasons cited in the second paper are

1. When children have something real to write about, they have a standard of measurement (truth) which motivates them to find the precise words, to achieve the right tone.

2. When children know and care about their subject, they want to communicate it.

3. Real experiences can fit onto half a page . . . stories often take pages to develop. Shorter pieces are more revisable. (p. 5)

In mid-October, the teacher asked her class to brainstorm for a list of elements for good topic selection. According to Calkins, the class elicited the following suggestions:

> Do write about something you care about.
> Do start off with action, with here-and-now.
> Do choose just one part or aspect of your topic.
>
> Don't write about things that are boring to you.
> Don't write about something you haven't done yet.
> Don't keep going if it gets worse and worse.
> Don't pick a topic that's too big for you to detail.
>
> (In press (b), p. 5)

Calkins believes that topic choice is a part of the revision process, observing that "Mrs. Howard introduced her third graders to revision through topic choice. She asked them to list ten topics and then choose the one they liked the best. Revision begins as selection" (In press (c), p. 11).

As it was with the first graders, revision is, in its initial stages, a difficult process for less-advanced third graders. Calkins (1979a) postulates that beginning writers view writing as a one-step process. They are reluctant to mar a page by crossing out words or phrases because they see the page as a final, unchangeable product. Graves, recounting his observations of one third grader, states:

> Once crossing out enters the picture for Brian or other children, the units of revision expand . . . The draft now takes on an important temporary quality. Words can be written in; others excluded. . . . the child realizes that print is not indelible, does not have to be correct the first time, is a means toward a more permanent end. (1979b, pp. 315-16)

Calkins has attempted to sequence the early stages of revision among third graders and to define teaching strategies that may assist

children in moving to the next stage:

Revision Stages	Suggestions for Next Step
1. One or two children don't independently reread or reconsider either their words or their mechanics. Writing is final, and for these children, it is extremely hard to put anything on paper at all.	1. These children can revise in other media. They should also be encouraged to reread what they write. Questions like "What is your favorite part?" help them begin to look back.
2. Some children reread and correct their papers. They only make small editing changes, and they erase rather than cross-out. They see each draft as a final copy.	2. By [the teacher's] listening carefully to what this child writes, and asking honest, real questions, the writer can learn that his [sic] reader needs more information. Content revision begins as "adding-on." Usually children first add on to the end of their piece, later they add on to middle sections through inserts.
3. Some children independently recopy their pieces. This is a step ahead of the child who merely corrects the original paper. Once there are two drafts, handwriting and spelling can be relegated to a later stage in the process, and the child can worry about content and language only. Also, as the child recopies he [sic] often changes the original.	3. The next step is to learn to make the first draft into a working manuscript. Write all over it. Star it. Change it. Use it.
4. Instead of viewing the second draft as a copy, the child begins to see it as a second try. Usually the child will at first disregard the first draft and do the second one "from scratch."	4. Encourage the child to use the first draft. "What did you learn from it?" "What needs to be cut? saved? changed?" Look first to the larger issues: content, sequence, focus. Later look at language, word-choice, precision. (In press (b), pp. 15-16)

In her study of a developmentally advanced third-grader, Calkins (1979b) traces the increasingly complex use and internalization of various revision strategies. Introduced to revision through topic selection and writing a number of possible leads before composing, the student gradually extended these editing and sampling skills to include the body of her draft. While, at first, it was necessary for the student to have all possible revisions at her fingertips for physical manipulation and selection, she soon learned to make many of these same decisions by abstraction. According to Calkins, "What begins as correction later becomes a guiding act. . . . Revision begins as a physical process and later seems to move underground and become abstract" (p. 23).

Closely related to their investigation of revision processes is the researchers' interest in rewriting. Rewriting is defined as the generation of successive drafts and may or may not entail the deliberate changes inherent in revision. As noted earlier, the third graders in this study were encouraged to rewrite. Calkin's investigation of the rewriting strategies and processes of seventeen of these children led her to postulate the existence of four kinds of rewriting at this level:

> Random drafting - These children write successive drafts without looking back to earlier drafts. Because they do not reread and reconsider what they have written, there is no comparison or weighing of options. Changes between drafts seem arbitrary. Rewriting appears to be a random, undirected process of continually moving on.
>
> Refining - For some children, rewriting means refining what they have already written. These children may copy a piece over and over. They may change spellings, neaten [sic] penmanship, add a few lines. But their subject and voice are determined by the first draft. Rewriting is a backwards motion of refining a draft. It is not a process of discovery.

Transition - These children move between periods when they refine drafts and periods when they abandon drafts, continually beginning new ones. They sometimes appear to be Random Drafters, but they are closer to being Refiners. Like Refiners, these children can look back to assess and refine old drafts. But unlike Refiners, they are not content with their earlier drafts. When Transition children abandon old drafts and begin new ones, they show a restlessness which may lead them to become Interacters.

Interacting - For these children, revision results from interaction between writer and draft, between writer and internalized audience, between writer and evolving subject. Children reread to see what they have said and to discover what they want to say. There is a constant vying between intended meaning and discovered meaning; between the forward motion of making and the backward motion of assessing. (In press (a), pp. 5-6)

Of the 17 children studied, Calkins indicates that two can be defined as Random Drafters, eight as Refiners, four as Transition children, and three as Interacters. She believes that each of these categories reflects varying abilities to use time and space, with the Random Drafters being the least flexible, unable to look back at what they have done in a past time frame. Refiners can look back, but they have a difficult time reshaping old content. Like Refiners, Transition children can also look back, but they show a dissatisfaction with previous drafts that indicates they may be looking ahead to an improved product. Interacters have entered a stage where they have put time and space restrictions behind them and are able to move backward and forward with equal facility.

The data presented thus far pertain to children in a relatively innovative writing curriculum. In these classrooms, language arts means writing. Spelling, punctuation, and grammar are handled on an individual need-to-know basis as problems arise in learning to write. One study undertaken by Calkins (1980b), sought to determine if third graders in

the "writing" class knew as much about punctuation as third graders in a more traditional, "mechanics" class. Both types of classes were held at Atkinson. According to Calkins, the "mechanics" class did little writing, and studied punctuation "through daily drills and workbook exercises" (1980b, p. 568). Several students from each class were interviewed and shown 14 different kinds of punctuation. The examiner drew each punctuation mark and asked, "What's this for?"

The results, according to Calkins, showed that

> The third grade "writers" who had not had formal instruction in punctuation could define/explain an average of 8.66 kinds of punctuation. The children who had studied punctuation through classwork, drills, and tests, but had rarely written, were only able to define/explain 3.85 kinds of punctuation. (1980b, pp. 568-569)

The marks included in the test and the number of children in each group successfully identifying them were as follows (p. 572):

Writing Class (total = 18)		Mechanics Class (total = 16)	
period	18	period	13
exclamation mark	16	question mark	10
question mark	16	exclamation mark	8
apostrophe	14	parentheses	7
paragraph sign	13	apostrophe	4
dash	12	dash	4
caret	11	comma	3
quotation marks	11	quotation marks	2
comma	10	semi-colon	0
colon	8	asterisk	0
parentheses	7	colon	0
asterisk	7	caret	0
semi-colon	1	paragraph sign	0

Calkins also used third graders' knowledge of punctuation to show how writing products improved in the "writing" class. An evaluation of students' writing in early September showed that they "wrote mostly simple sentences, without dialogue, sound effects, supportive

information, or exclamations." They needed only an average of 2.22 different kinds of punctuation to correctly punctuate a piece of writing, and they used an average of 1.25 different kinds. By February, their writing repertoire had expanded to the point that the same students needed 5.62 different punctuation marks per piece and actually used 5.0 different marks (1980b, p. 571).

Limitations of the Study

The data that have emerged from the first year of the Atkinson study should be evaluated in the light of certain limitations and restrictions inherent in the nature of the investigation. They are as follows:

(1) Although certain aspects of the study employ data acquired through the observation of the writing processes or products of whole classes, most of the research focused on the writing behaviors of only 16 children. Preliminary descriptions do not provide information regarding such variables as socio-economic status, ethnicity, or mental age that might permit comparisons with the general population.

(2) Although it was not the intention of the researchers to influence instruction, several teachers expressed interest in improving their writing curriculum. The researchers shared their experience and knowledge with the teachers and arranged for a consultant to conduct in-service instruction. Subsequently, some teachers altered their methods of teaching writing from relatively traditional modes to more innovative modes. Thus, some of the results of this study may not be applicable to children who are exposed to traditional methods of instruction.

(3) The researchers interacted daily with both teachers and students in a supportive, enthusiastic manner. Their participation and encouragement may have had a beneficial effect on writing performance.

(4) The study does not purport to make inferences about the relative "rates" at which children acquire specific writing abilities. The researchers were attempting to identify specific developmental sequences of writing behaviors that are common to all children. Even when these sequences are identified and properly applied to instruction, there is no expectation that all children will learn at the same rate.

Implications for Instruction

Despite these limitations, Graves and his colleagues have made a significant contribution to language arts education. They have shown that, given the right conditions, young children can perform many writing tasks that are generally thought to be too difficult for them.

If Graves' interpretation of his data is correct, such accomplishments can only occur when teachers are willing to deviate from the traditional curriculum and place writing on a par with reading and mathematics. "Writing," in the sense used by Graves, does not mean segmented instruction in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. It means writing.

Equal attention must be given to the three recurring phases of the writing process: rehearsal, drafting, and revision. In the rehearsal phase, children should be encouraged to choose their own topics and rehearse their writing through drawing, discussion, and experimenting with several leads. During the drafting phase, emphasis should be placed on content rather than mechanics; teachers should respond to the students' messages, helping them find out what they are trying to say. Revision is inseparable from drafting. Students should be encouraged to view their first drafts as tentative models, in need of gradual and thoughtful shaping.

In most classroom writing instruction, students must please only one audience--the teacher. Graves believes that this situation is a primary cause of the narrow, stilted content of student writing. Teachers, he never tires of repeating, must release control of the writing process to their students. In one place, he summarizes his position as follows:

> Once children . . . feel control of the writing process from the choice of the topic, selecting the best lead, to the clarification of experience through several drafts, a Copernican revolution has taken place. The center of control is more in the child's hands than the teacher's. Output doubles, revision increases ten-fold, sentences are crossed out, paragraphs rearranged. Word-unit revision is practiced only as a touch-up process in the final draft. (1979b, p. 316)

Graves' final and comprehensive report to the National Institute of Education will undoubtedly elaborate on his findings and provide detailed suggestions for the improvement of writing instruction. If the achievements of the young writers at Atkinson Academy can be replicated in other environments through the implementation of his recommendations, then American education will be much indebted for his contributions.*

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